Issues and Challenges in the Choice of Teaching as a Profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated issues and challenges in the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. In order to achieve this, the researcher formulated two research questions and two null hypotheses that guided the research work. The population for the study comprised of 1,230 teachers comprising of 400 male and 830 female teachers. The researcher used stratified random sampling technique to select 123 teachers comprising 40 male and 83 female teachers which participated in the study. A 20-item structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection for the study. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of education while Cronbach alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient of 0.69. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that factors influencing the choice of teaching include the inability to find any other job and because teaching it gives them time for their families/parenthood and personal businesses. The findings of the study also revealed reasons for this such as poor salary structure and remuneration of teachers, lacks professional status like other professions and low self-esteem and stigmatization of teachers as poor people. Based on the findings it was recommended that teaching should be fully professionalized with strict professional teachers' certification, registration, accreditations and regulations like other professions and that the government must urgently consider the improvement of the welfare of teachers as the first and major step in improving the quality of education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Teaching, profession, choice, challenges and issues.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a systematic rational and organized process of transmitting knowledge, attitude and skills in accordance with professional principles of education. The world over, teaching is regarded as an important tool in achieving broad educational goals and national objectives generally. In Nigeria, the seriousness attached to education was clearly underscored in the National Policy of Education (2004) where it stated that "The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development".

Education is a necessity as it helps to prepare and equip learners for all aspects of life. To achieve this, requires highly qualified teachers who are equipped with desirable knowledge, competency and commitment and are empowered to perform their multiple tasks in the classroom, school and community in a truly professional manner. Teachers are therefore, the most critical factor in the education system as the quality of

education in any country is reflected by and related to the quality of the men and women who serve as teachers in the system. Further credence was given to this view by [1] who referred to the teachers as the spark and key men in the drive to progress in our educational enterprise. Quality education thus, would depend on the quality of what and how teachers teach, which in turn depend on their knowledge, skills, commitment, level of motivation and job satisfaction.

The early missionaries believed that teaching is a calling and those who are committed are perfect for the job. To them, a prospective teacher should possess some attributes and these attributes according to [2] include among others, high professional and academic ability and qualification, interest in and aptitude for teaching, grasp of the subject matter, balance mental health and emotional stability, good quality voice and speech.

From the discussion so far, it could be argued that not all who teach in Nigerian schools and institutions of learning possess the above attributes, hence two categories of teachers are found in Nigeria system of education which include the professional and non-professional teachers. A professional teacher is one who possesses the minimum certificate to quality as a professional teacher. According to the Nigeria Teachers Services Manual (1990), a professional teacher is one who has a registered professional qualification which enables him to be appointed to teach at any appropriate level of recognized education in Nigeria and who is sound in mind is mentally alert. The Teachers Registration Council (2008) maintain that teaching as a profession requires from teachers expertise,

knowledge and specialized skill, which are usually maintained through vigorous and continuous training.

A profession is an occupation which requires a long and specialized period of training, skills or knowledge at a higher level of education. These unique features of profession, distinguishes one profession from the other, long period of training at a higher level, code of ethics, exclusion knowledge and skills, professional organization, control of entry, independence of practice, continued in-service growth, presence of professional journals, exaltation of services above personal gains.

According to [3];[4] the teaching profession has been faced with various categories of challenges which include low wages, bad motivation and poor welfares, irregular self-esteem in the society, absence of education professional academy, negative re-enforcement which is doing the profession no good, lack of professional and in-service trainings and low professional status. Others include ineffective machinery to enforce the code of conduct in the teaching profession, politicizing education, lack of autonomy by Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), poor budgetary allocation to teaching profession, poor work environment (e.g. infrastructures amenities etc) government's inability to register NUT as a profession organization, massive unqualified staff, porous entry qualification and lack of standards. Teachers in Nkanu West Local Government Area are not left out in the quagmire that has befallen teaching in Nigeria. Thus, the need to investigate the issues and challenges to teaching as a profession in the area.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The low ebb which teaching profession is suffering is disturbing and should be tackled with all available resources to elevate and enhance its prestige as a profession. The continued exodus of teachers who are highly trained remain

critical and constitute a major worry about the quality of Nigerian education. Teaching profession has remained unattractive in Nigeria. The profession is increasingly failing in attracting bright brains and has become deserted by men

particularly. The fallen standard of education in Nigeria also suggests that all is not well for teachers in the system and the profession as a body. Therefore, the problem of this study is to investigate the factors that influence and challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to:
1. identify the factor that influence choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State,
2. find out the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Questions
The study was guided by two research questions as follows:
1. What are the factors that influence the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?
2. What are the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Research Hypotheses
Two research hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study.
1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the factors that influence the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
The research adopted for this study was survey research design. A survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people considered to be representative of the entire group [5].

Area of the Study
The study was conducted in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Population for the Study
The population for the study comprised the entire male and female teachers in government owned secondary schools in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. According to the Statistics Department of the Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB), the total population of the teachers in the area is 1,230 comprising 400 male and 830 female teachers.

Sample and Sampling Techniques
The research used stratified random sampling to select 10% of the total population of teachers for the study. Thus, the sample size for the study was 123 comprising 40 and 83 female teachers.

Instrument for Data Collection
The instrument used for data collection for the study was a structured questionnaire titled "Challenges of Choice of Teaching as a Profession Questionnaire (CCTPQ). The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A seeks information on the personal data while section B is a 20-item questionnaire developed by the researcher with a four point rating scale. The questionnaire items were arranged in two clusters to elicit information for answering the two research questions and testing the null hypotheses.

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire was giver to two experts in Education Foundations Department of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) for face validation. The experts were requested to read the items of the instrument and make necessary corrections to ensure clarity of items, phrase, suitability and comprehensiveness of the items.

Reliability of the Instrument

To determine the internal consistency of the instrument and ensure that it is reliable, copies of the questionnaire were administered to ten (10) male and ten (10) female teachers in Imo State. The responses on individual items of the questionnaire were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha statistics. A reliability coefficient of 0.69 was obtained which indicated that the instrument was reliable.

DATA COLLECTION

The researcher administered instruments to the teachers directly with the help of three research assistants and collected the completed copies on the spot.
This helped the researchers to reduce the chances of the questionnaire being misplaced or not returned by the respondents. However, out of the one hundred and twenty-three (123) copies of the questionnaire distributed, one hundred and nineteen (119) were retrieved which amounted to 97% return rate.

DATA ANALYSIS

Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used for testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and 117 degree of freedom.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the factors that influence the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of female and male teachers on the factors that influence the choice of teaching as a profession

S/N	Item Statement	Female Teachers			Male Teachers		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec
1	I became a teacher accidentally	3.61	0.67	A	3.74	0.59	A
2	My parents forced me into teaching	1.60	1.04	D	1.77	1.11	D
3	I joined teaching because my parents could not afford sponsoring me to read better course	2.76	0.96	A	2.00	1.00	D
4	I joined teaching because I could not find any other job	3.75	0.49	A	3.62	0.67	A
5	I joined teaching because it gives me time for my family/parenthood and personal business	2.89	0.81	A	2.56	1.02	A
6	I joined teaching because it is easy to get employment in the profession	3.06	0.80	A	2.69	0.95	A
7	I joined teaching because it is a popular profession in my vicinity	3.53	0.66	A	3.77	0.43	A
8	I joined teaching profession because I have passion for walking with children and youths	2.00	1.23	D	1.74	1.09	D
9	I joined teaching because it has been my dreamed profession	1.41	0.74	D	1.13	0.34	D
10	I joined teaching because it gives me opportunity to contribute positively to the society	1.78	1.17	D	1.87	1.20	D
	Grand mean	2.64	0.86	A	2.49	0.84	A

Source: Researcher's computations

The results in Table 1 revealed that the female teachers agreed that all the factors expressed in items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 influence their choice of teaching as a profession as these items have mean ratings above the acceptable benchmark of 2.50. On the other hand, items 2,8,9 and 10 had means of 1.60, 2.00, 1.41 and 1.78 respectively which are below the cut-off point of 2.50 and therefore indicates that the female teachers did not consider these items to influence their choice of teaching as a profession. Similarly, the table shows that the mean ratings of male teachers on items 1, 4,5, 6 and 7 are above the cut-off mean of 2.50 which shows that these factors influence male teachers' choice of teaching as a profession. The mean ratings of male teachers in items 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10 fall below the acceptable benchmark of 2.50 and therefore indicates that these factors do not influence the male teachers' choice of teaching as a profession.

Research Question 2
What are the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of female and male teachers on the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession

S/N	Item Statement	Female Principals			Male Principals		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec
11	Poor reputation and disregard of teachers in the society	3.71	0.58	A	3.51	0.94	A
12	Poor salary structure and remuneration of teachers	3.68	0.57	A	3.72	0.60	A
13	Poor condition of service and working environment in teaching profession	1.94	0.96	D	2.92	1.15	A
14	Teaching lacks professional status like other professions	3.64	0.53	A	3.64	0.63	A
15	Teaching is stressful and requires high workload	2.09	1.23	D	2.59	0.99	A
16	Fear of standing before and talking to many students in a class	2.85	0.99	A	1.77	1.11	D
17	Perception of teaching as a last resort of failures and low class people's job	2.89	0.86	A	3.26	0.94	A
18	Handling unruly parents, indiscipline and negative attitude of students towards learning	2.98	0.98	A	1.67	0.98	D
19	Lack of social benefits like housing loans, car loans, insurance and other incentives to teachers	3.16	0.85	A	3.31	1.03	A
20	Low self-esteem and stigmatization of teachers as poor people	3.28	0.81	A	3.51	0.64	A
	Grand mean	**3.02**	**0.84**	**A**	**2.99**	**0.90**	**A**

Source: Researcher's computations

Table 2 shows that the female teachers' means range from 3.71 to 1.94 with a grand mean of 3.02. The Table shows that in exception of items 13 and 15 with means of 1.94 and 2.09 respectively, all other items were considered as challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession by female teachers in secondary schools in Nkanu West Local Government Area. On the other hand, the male teachers' means range from 3.72 to 1.67 with a grand mean of 2.99. Thus, all the items except 16 and 18 with means of 1.77 and 1.67, were considered as challenges to choice of teaching as a profession by male teachers in secondary schools in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Null Hypothesis 1
There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the factors that influence the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference in Means of Female and Male Teachers on the Factors Affecting Choice of Teaching as a Profession

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Df	t-cal	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Female Teachers	80	30.20	3.29				
				117	0.490	0.619	*Accept H_{0_1}*
Male Teachers	39	29.90	2.68				

Source: Researcher's computations

In Table 3 the mean response of female teachers is 30.20 with a standard deviation of 3.29 while the mean response of male teachers is 29.90 with a standard deviation of 2.68. The calculated value of the t-test (t-cal) is 0.490 with a p-value of 0.619 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, which implies that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the factors influencing the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State

Null Hypothesis 2
There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference in Means of Female and Male Teachers on the Challenges to the Choice of Teaching as a Profession

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Df	t-cal	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Female Teachers	80	26.39	2.85				
				117	1.60	0.111	*Accept H_{0_2}*
Male Teachers	39	25.46	3.16				

Source: Researcher's computations

Table 8 presents the results of the t-test analysis of the hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession. The results show that the calculated value of the t-test (t-cal) is 1.60 with a p-value of 0.111. This shows that the p-value is greater than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of female and male teachers on the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study on research question one (Table1), shows that certain factors influence the choice of teaching as a profession by both male and female

teachers. Some of these factors which are very important to highlight include the fact they join teaching because they could not find job in any other profession and because teaching was a popular profession in their vicinity. Another important finding of the study is that many teachers join teaching accidentally as it was not their dreamed profession. This study has raised the fundamental issue of teaching profession in Enugu State against the backdrop of the philosophical assumption that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The continued falling standard of the Nigerian education has always been traced to the teachers attitude to the job among other things. The finding confirms the saying that teaching has become "the return of the repressed, an all comers' affair". To be a teacher in Nigeria is almost considered as a curse by young people and would immediately reject any suggestion to become one by emphatically echoing "God forbid". The findings of this study with high means of 3.61 for female and 3.74 for male show that even those who are teaching found themselves in the profession accidentally and that the response is unanimous with low standard deviations of 0.67 and 0.59 respectively.

The analysis of research question two also reveal the challenges to the choice of teaching as a profession. These factors include poor reputation and disregard of teachers in the society, poor salary structure and remuneration of teachers, perception of teaching as a last resort of failures and low class people's job, low self-esteem and stigmatization of teachers as poor people as well as the fact that teaching lacks of professional status like other professions. The findings are in agreement with the views of [6] who found that for an occupation to be a profession, it must require a special education, skills and training. He noted that artificial restrictions and barriers are some of the characteristic of a profession which teaching does not possess. The view point that many people are indeed unwilling to take to teaching profession is based on the consistent decline in students' enrolment for education courses in Nigerian universities and colleges of education. The decline is attributed to factors such poor perception of and attitudes to both students, teachers and teaching as a profession, low morale in teaching, low status and prestige, poor condition of service and meager salary of teachers. The salary situation in teaching has contributed to the high degree of instability among teachers and has remained a major factor that makes teaching unattractive especially to men and young people. The Nigerian teacher faces the battle of his standing in the society and dismal esteem. A society that worships affluence and the teacher's remunerations does not qualify him to join the rank of the rich such that some people consider remaining unemployed or taking to any other engagements than to be a teacher. The colossal implication of the societal relegation of teachers is seen every day in the dwindling quality of education in Nigeria as no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The goals of the nations' education system can only be achieved with teachers who have passion for the teaching profession.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that many people have become teachers in the area not because they have interest in the profession but for other purposes that do not contribute to the development of education in the nation such as the inability to find any other job and because teaching it gives them time for their families/parenthood and personal businesses. The findings of the study also reveal reasons for this which includes poor salary structure and remuneration of teachers, lacks professional status like other professions, low self-esteem and stigmatization of teachers as poor people. The implication

of this is that the Nigerian education cannot be expected to be anything better as only highly motivated and passionate teachers can achieve the goals of the education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, following recommendations were made:

1. Teaching should be fully professionalized with strict professional teachers' certification, registration, accreditations and regulations like other professions.
2. Only those who have teaching qualifications should be allowed to teach in all schools in Nigeria.
3. The government must urgently consider the improvement of the welfare of teachers as the first and major step in improving the quality of education in Nigeria.

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